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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MANN: A WELCOME FIGURE IN TURKMEN STATE MEDIA -
MEDIA REACTION TO HIS RECENT VISIT

¶1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

¶2. (U) SUMMARY: Turkmenistan's state media widely reported on U.S. Coordinator for Eurasian Energy Diplomacy Steven Mann's November 20 meeting with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The same day, media sources accurately carried Mann's remarks from Turkmenistan's International Oil and Gas Conference (TIOGE) in which he emphasized opening Turkmenistan's energy market for foreign investment and partnership. END SUMMARY.

MEDIA HIGHLIGHT MANN'S MEETING WITH TURKMEN LEADER

¶3. (U) The November 20 "Watan" TV news program highlighted Mann's meeting with President Berdimuhamedov, praising bilateral relations with the United States. The news story reported that both sides reaffirmed the mutually beneficial partnership between the two countries. The story ended with an accurate translation of Mann's remarks to state media, following the meeting. The same day "Owaz" radio channel's evening news program (Turkmen, Russian, English) carried a similar story on the meeting.

¶4. (U) The following day, stories appeared on the front pages of state-run dailies "Neytralniy Turkmenistan" (Russian, circ. 44,991) and "Turkmenistan" (Turkmen, circ. 33,391). Articles were also posted on the government website "Turkmenistan Golden Age" (Turkmen, Russian, English) and on the Russia-based, pro-government website "Turkmenistan.ru" (Russian, English). In subsequent days, most of the state weeklies reprinted a shorter version of the news story.

ACCURATE COVERAGE OF MANN'S APPEARANCE AT TIOGE

¶5. (U) In rare, "double coverage" of a foreign visitor, the above-mentioned "Watan" TV news broadcast also included Mann's interview with a Watan correspondent taped on the margins of TIOGE. A "Reuters" November 20 news story accurately highlighted quotes from Mann's conference remarks, focused on his urging Turkmenistan to involve western companies and attract international partnership in developing the country's energy resources.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: Coverage of Steve Mann's visit naturally focused on discussions and cooperation in the energy sector, a safe topic for state media. As all coverage is directed or heavily influenced by the president's office, the rare, double appearance of Mann on the evening news program was an indication of official support for cooperation with the United States in energy. It might also be a

sign of growing comfort with Ambassador Mann as an interlocutor, which is no small accomplishment given the importance that Turkmen attach to personal relationships. END COMMENT.

MILES